

APPENDIX

(Amendment Accompanying RCE)

715.07

MANUAL OF PATENT EXAMINING PROCEDURE

nation of the exhibits pointing out exactly what facts are established and relied on by applicant. 505 F.2d at 718-19, 184 USPQ at 33. See also *In re Harry*, 333 F.2d 920, 142 USPQ 164 (CCPA 1964) (Affidavit "asserts that facts exist but does not tell what they are or when they occurred.").

II. ESTABLISHMENT OF DATES

If the dates of the exhibits have been removed or blocked off, the matter of dates can be taken care of in the body of the oath or declaration.

When alleging that conception or a reduction to practice occurred prior to the effective date of the reference, the dates in the oath or declaration may be the actual dates or, if the applicant or patent owner does not desire to disclose his or her actual dates, he or she may merely allege that the acts referred to occurred prior to a specified date. However, the actual dates of acts relied on to establish diligence must be provided. See MPEP § 715.07(a) regarding the diligence requirement.

III. THREE WAYS TO SHOW PRIOR INVENTION

The affidavit or declaration must state FACTS and produce such documentary evidence and exhibits in support thereof as are available to show conception and completion of invention in this country or in a NAFTA or WTO member country (MPEP § 715.07(c)), at least the conception being at a date prior to the effective date of the reference. Where there has not been reduction to practice prior to the date of the reference, the applicant or patent owner must also show diligence in the completion of his or her invention from a time just prior to the date of the reference continuously up to the date of an actual reduction to practice or up to the date of filing his or her application (filing constitutes a constructive reduction to practice, 37 CFR 1.131).

As discussed above, 37 CFR 1.131(b) provides three ways in which an applicant can establish prior invention of the claimed subject matter. The showing of facts must be sufficient to show:

(A) >(actual)< reduction to practice of the invention prior to the effective date of the reference; or

(B) conception of the invention prior to the effective date of the reference coupled with due diligence

from prior to the reference date to a subsequent (actual) reduction to practice; or

(C) conception of the invention prior to the effective date of the reference coupled with due diligence from prior to the reference date to the filing date of the application (constructive reduction to practice).



A conception of an invention, though evidenced by disclosure, drawings, and even a model, is not a complete invention under the patent laws, and confers no rights on an inventor, and has no effect on a subsequently granted patent to another, UNLESS THE INVENTOR FOLLOWS IT WITH REASONABLE DILIGENCE BY SOME OTHER ACT, such as an actual reduction to practice or filing an application for a patent. *Automatic Weighing Mach. Co. v. Pneumatic Scale Corp.*, 166 F.2d 288, 1909 C.D. 498, 139 O.G. 991 (1st Cir. 1909).

Conception is the mental part of the inventive act, but it must be capable of proof, as by drawings, complete disclosure to another person, etc. In *Mergenthaler v. Scudder*, 1897 C.D. 724, 81 O.G. 1417 (D.C. Cir. 1897), it was established that conception is more than a mere vague idea of how to solve a problem; the means themselves and their interaction must be comprehended also.

In general, proof of actual reduction to practice requires a showing that the apparatus actually existed and worked for its intended purpose. However, "there are some devices so simple that a mere construction of them is all that is necessary to constitute reduction to practice." *In re Asahi/America Inc.*, 68 F.3d 442, 37 USPQ2d 1204, 1206 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (Citing *Newkirk v. Lulejian*, 825 F.2d 1581, 3USPQ2d 1793 (Fed. Cir. 1987) and *Sachs v. Wadsworth*, 48 F.2d 928, 929, 9 USPQ 252, 253 (CCPA 1931). The claimed restraint coupling held to be so simple a device that mere construction of it was sufficient to constitute reduction to practice. Photographs, coupled with articles and a technical report describing the coupling in detail were sufficient to show reduction to practice.).

The facts to be established under 37 CFR 1.131 are similar to those to be proved in interference. The difference lies in the way in which the evidence is presented. If applicant disagrees with a holding that the facts are insufficient to overcome the rejection, his or her remedy is by appeal from the continued rejection.

See MPEP § 2138.04 through § 2138.06 for a detailed discussion of the concepts of conception, reasonable diligence, and reduction to practice.

For the most part, the terms “conception,” “reasonable diligence,” and “reduction to practice” have the same meanings under 37 CFR 1.131 as they have in interference proceedings. However, in *In re Eickmeyer*, 602 F.2d 974, 202 USPQ 655 (CCPA 1979), the court stated:

The purpose of filing a [37 CFR 1.131] affidavit is not to demonstrate prior invention, *per se*, but merely to antedate the effective date of a reference. See *In re Moore*, 58 CCPA 1340, 444 F.2d 572, 170 USPQ 260 (1971). Although the test for sufficiency of an affidavit under Rule 131(b) parallels that for determining priority of invention in an interference under 35 U.S.C. 102(g), it does not necessarily follow that Rule 131 practice is controlled by interference law. To the contrary, “[t]he parallel to interference practice found in Rule 131(b) should be recognized as one of convenience rather than necessity.” *Id.* at 1353. 444 F.2d at 580, 170 USPQ at 267. Thus, “the ‘conception’ and ‘reduction to practice’ which must be established under the rule need not be the same as what is required in the ‘interference’ sense of those terms.” *Id.*; accord, *In re Borkowski*, 505 F.2d 713, 718-19, 184 USPQ 29, 33 (CCPA 1974).

One difference is that in interference practice a reduction to practice requires a proof that a utility was known, whereas under 37 CFR 1.131 practice, proof of a utility must be shown only if the reference discloses a utility. *In re Wilkinson*, 304 F.2d 673, 134 USPQ 171 (CCPA 1962); *In re Moore*, 444 F.2d 572, 170 USPQ 260 (CCPA 1971). Where proof of utility is required, whether or not test results are required to establish the utility of the subject matter in question depends on the facts of each case. The ultimate issue is whether the evidence is such that one of ordinary skill in the art would be satisfied to a reasonable certainty that the subject matter necessary to antedate the reference possessed the alleged utility. *In re Blake*, 358 F.2d 750, 149 USPQ 217 (CCPA 1966). Also, in interference practice, conception, reasonable diligence, and reduction to practice require corroboration, whereas averments made in a 37 CFR 1.131 affidavit or declaration do not require corroboration; an applicant may stand on his or her own affidavit or declaration if he or she so elects. *Ex parte Hook*, 102 USPQ 130 (Bd. App. 1953).

Form paragraph 7.59 or 7.63 (both reproduced in MPEP § 715) may be used where insufficient evidence is included in a 37 CFR 1.131 affidavit.

715.07(a) Diligence

Where conception occurs prior to the date of the reference, but reduction to practice is afterward, it is not enough merely to allege that applicant or patent owner had been diligent. *Ex parte Hunter*, 1889 C.D. 218, 49 O.G. 733 (Comm'r Pat. 1889). Rather, applicant must show evidence of facts establishing diligence.

In determining the sufficiency of a 37 CFR 1.131 affidavit or declaration, diligence need not be considered unless conception of the invention prior to the effective date is clearly established, since diligence comes into question only after prior conception is established. *Ex parte Kantor*, 177 USPQ 455 (Bd. App. 1958).

What is meant by diligence is brought out in *Christie v. Seybold*, 1893 C.D. 515, 64 O.G. 1650 (6th Cir. 1893). In patent law, an inventor is either diligent at a given time or he is not diligent; there are no degrees of diligence. An applicant may be diligent within the meaning of the patent law when he or she is doing nothing, if his or her lack of activity is excused. Note, however, that the record must set forth an explanation or excuse for the inactivity; the USPTO or courts will not speculate on possible explanations for delay or inactivity. See *In re Nelson*, 420 F.2d 1079, 164 USPQ 458 (CCPA 1970). Diligence must be judged on the basis of the particular facts in each case. See MPEP § 2138.06 for a detailed discussion of the diligence requirement for proving prior invention.

Under 37 CFR 1.131, the critical period in which diligence must be shown begins just prior to the effective date of the reference or activity and ends with the date of a reduction to practice, either actual or constructive (i.e., filing a United States patent application). Note, therefore, that only diligence before reduction to practice is a material consideration. The “lapse of time between the completion or reduction to practice of an invention and the filing of an application thereon” is not relevant to an affidavit or declaration under 37 CFR 1.131. See *Ex parte Merz*, 75 USPQ 296 (Bd. App. 1947).